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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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TITLE:

THE KING IS DEAD:  
REGAINING THE THRONE

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD ARTILLERY, CORE COMPETENCY ATROPHY,  
AND THE WAY AHEAD

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The King is Dead: Regaining the Throne

**Author:** Major Julian T. Urquidez, United States Army

**Thesis:** The demand for “boots on the ground” supporting counter-insurgency operations (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, eight years of continuous in lieu of missions, and the US Army’s transformation / modularity has had negative unintended consequences on the Field Artillery branch.

**Discussion:** The field artillery more than any other branch in the US Army has been marginalized following major combat operations. On 09 April 2003, President George W. Bush declared major combat operations over and the beginning of stability and support operations (SASO). The field artillery now found itself trying to eat soup with a knife. The once mighty “King of Battle” who by all accounts delivered coordinated deadly fires that had a kinetic effect on the Iraqi Army, was now tasked to perform non-standard missions. The field artillery soon received multiple in lieu of missions including: collection of enemy ammunition, training the Iraqi civil defense corps, convoy security / escort, conducting maneuver patrols, staffing command posts, commanding forward operating bases (FOBs), safeguarding facilities, transporting logistics, civil affairs operations, advising and assisting provincial reconstruction teams, conducting information operations, and building partnerships with both host nation and coalition forces. However, despite the overwhelming success, artillerymen and artillery units alike have suffered a great degree of core competency atrophy and currently may be unprepared for future high intensity conflict (HIC).

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the once honed and trained field artillery, that silenced the Iraqi Army in 2003 is losing its ability to attract and retain the best and brightest soldiers, NCOs, and Officers, train itself, and worst of all has lost the confidence of many maneuver commanders. However, to regain the thrown the U.S. Army field artillery must regain its core competencies, work to increase the number of fire brigades to one per division for a total of ten fires brigades, and work to restructure the MTOE reconsolidating the fire support element back into the fires battalion. We must not forget that when states focus their armies on doing nothing but counterinsurgency and world constabulary missions excluding conventional warfare strategic failure can result as did the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in 2006. There is more at stake than losing the moniker “The King of Battle”, at stake is losing the ability to maneuver and fire which in turn allows our Army to validate its existence defending the American way of life and winning our nation’s war. The American way of life does not depend on the field artillery, but the ability to defend the American way of life does.

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## Preface

As a career Field Artilleryman I have served twice in Iraq and once in Afghanistan accumulating over 28 months deployed in support of Major Combat Operations (MCO). I feel it is my professional duty to highlight the atrophy in the Field Artillery branch and then to focus on how the “King of Battle” can regain proficiency in its core competencies. Over the past eight years the Field Artillery more than any other branch in the U.S. Army has suffered an identity crisis. The effects of modularity and supporting counter-insurgency operations (COIN) have had unintended devastating effects on a once strong and vibrant branch. The youth of the Field Artillery, the young company grade officers and non-commissioned officers, are the future of the Field Artillery. These future Field Artillerymen should be applauded for their magnificent performance over the past eight years on the battlefield performing both standard and non-standard missions. These young Field Artillerymen have been dubbed pent-athletes because they have performed far more non-standard artillery missions in support of MCO than artillery specific missions. Modularity and multiple “in lieu of” missions has created the perfect storm that has marginalized today’s U.S. Army Field Artillery branch.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to deploy in support of major combat operations and perform as a field artillerymen and also deploy and perform non-standard missions as well. As a junior Captain I deployed from March 2003 to November 2003 as part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 18<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment. During that rotation in support of OIF I I had the opportunity to serve initially as the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer and then the Battalion Assistant Operations Officer (AS3). Moreover, during that rotation I had the great opportunity to serve as the Officer in Charge (OIC) of a coalition of cadre training the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC). I then again deployed in support of OIF III-OIF IV to Iraq in January 2005 and

redeployed back to Ft. Bragg, NC January 2006. During that rotation I had the pleasure to serve as LTG John R. Vines Deputy Secretary to the Combined and Joint Staff (SCJS) while assigned to Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Following that deployment I was selected to command Bravo Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 27<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment and deployed Bravo Battery in support of OEF from August 2007 through April 2008. During that rotation I had the privilege of delivering fires in support of coalition forces and defeating high value targets. Following command LTC Samuel Ashley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group commander, provided me the opportunity of a lifetime to serve as the Fire Support Officer for 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group. More recently, I was selected to manage all U.S. Army field artillery captains and then concurrently selected to serve as the executive officer to the Deputy Director Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD). While serving in that capacity I had the unique opportunity as a junior officer to witness how Army policy is written and how the Army truly functions.

For a U.S. Army Officer, attending the Marine Corps Command and Staff College is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I would be remiss if I did not thank COL Mark Lessig, Director OPMD, and COL Jeffrey Leib, Deputy OPMD, for their unwavering support, leadership, and opportunity to compete for this amazing opportunity. Moreover, I would like to publicly thank COL Jeffrey Lieb for the opportunity to visit and interview senior Army leaders at Army Human Resource Command.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my master of military studies mentor Dr. E. J. Erickson and faculty advisor LtCol Patrick Simon for their personal mentorship and the support needed to visit both Carlisle Barrack, PA (USAWC) and Ft Knox, KY (AHRC) to research and develop as an Officer.

Lastly and most importantly I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Emily, for her unwavering support. She never complained once while I read or researched and was always there with a fresh cup of coffee and something to make me smile when I had no idea there was anything to smile about. I would also like to thank my son J.P. for his support. He was always there when dad needed help in any way, he is my legacy. To my young daughter Kaitlyn, thank you for your smiles and the joy you have brought to my life.



*No branch of the Army has suffered a greater identity crisis than the Field Artillery, as a result of transformation, COIN-centric operations and the non-standard manpower demands of OIF/OEF. The once mighty "King of Battle" has been described by one of its own officers as a "dead branch walking." Now the Army is beginning to see real consequences in our ability to integrate fires with maneuver – an important capability for both COIN and high intensity conflict (HIC). In fact one could argue that speed and accuracy counts for as much, if not more, in COIN as in HIC. We believe that it's urgent that we take another look at the structure of this important combat arm.*<sup>1</sup>

*COL MacFarland, COL Shields, and COL Snow (2008)*

## **Introduction**

The Field Artillery branch earned its nickname "The King of Battle" for the massive amount of firepower, destruction, and its decisive kinetic effect on the battlefield. The King is and will always be anchored in mathematical computation and the ability to adapt, adopt, and lead in technical innovation. The "King of Battle" traces its roots in adaptability to 1620 when King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden implemented revolutionary changes to the field artillery in its organization and mobile tactics, and Frederick the Great of Prussia established the importance of massing fires against the enemy.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, at the conclusion of World War II General George S. Patton, an Armor officer, said "I do not have to tell you who won the war. You know, the Artillery did."<sup>3</sup> While General Patton could at times be known for his pompous attitude and stubbornness, his appreciation for the "King of Battle" was sincere because of its desired decisive effects on the enemy. The U.S. Army Field Artillery in 1989 was comprised of two hundred and eighteen battalions and by 1999 had been reduced to one hundred and forty one battalions.<sup>4</sup> Currently in 2011 only 61 tactical field artillery battalions remain on active duty.<sup>5</sup> More recently, during major combat operations (MCO) in Operation Iraqi Freedom the field artillery delivered nearly 64,000 projectiles in support of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime.<sup>6</sup> In less than a month the US Army and Marine Corps field artillery had delivered 64,000 projectiles with speed, accuracy, and lethality.

The Field Artillery branch, more than any other branch in the US Army has suffered core competency atrophy following MCO. On 09 April 2003, President George W. Bush declared MCO over and stability and support operations (SASO) to begin. The field artillery now found itself trying to eat soup with a knife. The once mighty "King of Battle" who by all accounts delivered coordinated deadly fires that had a kinetic effect on the Iraqi Army, was now tasked to perform non-standard missions.<sup>7</sup> The field artillery soon received multiple in lieu of missions including: collection of enemy ammunition, training the Iraqi civil defense corps, convoy security / escort, conducting maneuver patrols, staffing command posts, commanding forward operating bases (FOBs), safeguarding facilities, transporting logistics, civil affairs operations, advising and assisting provincial reconstruction teams, conducting information operations, and building partnerships with both host nation and coalition forces. While these "in lieu of" missions have contributed immensely to the United States success in the Global War on Terror proving again that the field artillery and its field artillerymen are versatile and can succeed on any field of battle. General Odierno in his interview with the FA Journal states this the best<sup>8</sup>

You are the Army's ultimate "Pentathletes" with your leadership, flexibility, agility, adaptability and attitude toward mission success. You execute many diverse missions in multiple warfighting functions very well. As a branch, you are involved at every level of Army operations, from the company to the corps levels, giving you a comprehensive perspective of fires and maneuver. As captains, you work at the battalion level, as majors at the brigade level and as lieutenant colonels at the division level - gaining experience and expertise at one level above your rank. You understand effects at all levels and how they affect the range of military operations - tremendous value added to the Army. As Artillerymen, you should be very proud of what you have accomplished.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the overwhelming success, artillerymen and artillery units alike have suffered a great degree of core competency atrophy and currently may be unprepared for future high intensity conflict (HIC). Colonel Samuel R. White, a distinguished Field Artillerymen writes,<sup>10</sup>

Changes created by persistent conflict, the unanticipated effects of modularity and the Artillery's expanded skill sets have placed a strain on the Artillery force. The Artillery is "out of balance" and is not postured for the future-there are capability gaps in the formation. Eliminating a senior Artillery headquarters relationship and responsibility has created inadequate training and readiness oversight (TRO) for the artillery and fires system within the brigade combat teams (BCTs). In addition, a combination of reduced force structure and piecemeal commitments of fires brigades into the current fight has left insufficient force Field Artillery headquarters (FFA HQ) to support divisions and corps.<sup>11</sup>

The mission of the Field Artillery is to, "deliver and integrate lethal and non-lethal fires to enable joint and maneuver commanders to dominate their operational environment across the spectrum of conflict."<sup>12</sup> Colonels MacFarland, Shields, Snow, each former Brigade Combat Team (BCT) commanders, combined efforts to co-author a white paper distributed to the Chief of Staff of the Army, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and Army G3/5/7 in which they communicated their concerns over the Field Artillery's alarming degradation of core competencies. They wrote "as BCT commanders we have watched the deterioration of the Field Artillery branch with growing alarm. We are former maneuver commanders who recognize the importance of having reliable, fast, and accurate fire support and wish to provide the Army's leadership with a "customer's perspective" on the issue."<sup>13</sup> This analytical paper will focus on the issues facing the field artillery community, the effects of transformation and modularity, the current state of the Field Artillery, the current Field Artillery Campaign Plan, and the Way Ahead. The demand for "boots on the ground" supporting counter-insurgency operations (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, eight years of continuous "in lieu of missions", and the US Army's transformation / modularity has had negative unintended consequences on the Field Artillery branch.

## Current Issues facing the Field Artillery Community

*With each passing month that we continue to let these perishable skills atrophy and lose our expert practitioners, we are mortgaging not only flexibility in today's fight, but our ability to fight the next war as well.*<sup>14</sup>

*COL MacFarland, Shields, and Snow (2008)*

In the article, “*Let’s Build an Army to Win All Wars*” written by Dr. Gian P. Gentile in 2009, he explains, “The Army’s new and most important doctrinal manuals confirm that fighting as a core competency has been eclipsed in the importance and primacy by the function of nationbuilding.”<sup>15</sup> Dr. Gentile is eluding to the fact that he believes that the US Army is concentrating excessively on COIN and to the detriment of preparing to deploy in conventional warfare. Does this theory have any basis or is this the product of a dinosaur that cannot see that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the probability conventional is low at best? His critics would argue that the need for a large trained standing conventional force is not necessary. This could however be no further from the truth. The Department of Defense (DOD) mission is, “to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the DOD also articulates that the DOD is a war-fighter first and as such, has no peer; however this means that while the DOD is a warfighting entity they must achieve a balance in which DOD can deter and provide humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and disaster relief.<sup>17</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates argued in 2009 that, given the range of future threats the United States faces, its military must “balance”.<sup>18</sup> The balance the Secretary of Defense described the balance between proficiency in conventional capabilities and developing COIN and irregular warfare capabilities. These defense capabilities have a supporting relationship and both pillars that allow the United States Department of Defense to deter, project power, and protect our national interest. Secretary Gates writes, “to truly achieve victory as Clausewitz defined it—attaining a political

objective—the U.S. military’s ability to “kick down the door” must be matched by its ability to clean up the mess and even rebuild the house afterward.”<sup>19</sup>

So what does this have to do with the current issues facing the Field Artillery? This has everything to do with the current issues facing the Field Artillery. The Field Artillery is one of those tools of national power that the Secretary of Defense is talking about being out of balance. Secretary Gates, reminds the American public to remember the nation-state and that United States still has to contend with the security challenges posed by the military forces of other countries.<sup>20</sup> Even more relevant to this analytical paper is the Secretary’s quote, “As a result of the demands of Afghanistan and Iraq, ground forces have not been able to stay proficient in specialties such as field artillery in the Army.”<sup>21</sup>

U.S. Army Field Artillery must rebalance itself and be prepared for persistent HIC or irregular warfare and must remain a dominate provider of lethal and non lethal effects allowing the joint and maneuver commander to dominate the operating environment. However, the Combat Training Centers (CTCs) 2008 were results highlighted in the white paper entitled “The King and I: The Impending Crisis in Field Artillery’s ability to provide Fire Support to Maneuver Commanders” and identified in detail the Field Artillery’s atrophy.<sup>22</sup> The following list identifies “The King and I’s” alarming results:

1. Fires Annex only produced in 20% of rotational unit’s Operational Orders (OPORD)
2. No Fires net is maintained and if there is one, it is not monitored.
3. 90% of fire supporters are serving outside of their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)
4. 90%+ of available fire supporters are uncertified
5. Counterfire is seldom executed
6. Inability to fire plan prevents effective Close Air support (CAS) application
7. Most cannon platoons have fired “out of safe” if not prevented by observer controller (OCs)
8. Leaders no longer understand the need to calibrate or use meteorological data (MET). The culture of relentlessly pursuing accurate fires is eroding.

9. The brand new second lieutenant is usually the most competent fire direction officer in the battalion (BN)
10. The entire sensor to shooter chain is broken-Fires Battalion appear unable to fix the Forward Observer problems<sup>23</sup>

These CTC observations not only alarmed senior Field Artillery leaders, but also made a statement well heard by Senior Army officials. Furthermore, the document also drew attention to the fact that most artillery units have passed the point in which they have the ability to train themselves without external support because the majority of the artillery units have been conducting multiple in lieu of missions or COIN related mission in support of the current fight. Also annotated in this report was the fact that due to modularity, Fires Battalions that are now organic to maneuver BCTs have no O-6 senior leader or Force Field Artillery Headquarters in their chain of command to provide the battalion training readiness and oversight (TRO). Prior to transformation and modularity Division Artillery (DIVARTY) would have provided the TRO for all field artillery battalions providing fire support to maneuver brigades within its respective division. Because of transformation and modularity this responsibility now lays in the hands of the BCT commander, a maneuver commander without in depth fire support experience. In their observation the Fires Battalion commander does not have the inherent ability to train, coordinate resource, nor do they have the manpower to conduct external evaluations. Colonel Michael J. Hartig, the senior fire support officer at the National Training Center from 2007 to 2008, in an unpublished monograph *The Future of the Field Artillery* also identifies two main reasons for the degradation of core competency skill sets.<sup>24</sup>

One is that Fires Battalions, as well as fire supporters, have been used primarily to fill nonstandard missions during their previous deployments into theater. The second reason is that under modularization the responsibility for fire support training rests with maneuver commanders who are neither trained nor resourced to perform these tasks<sup>25</sup>

Another issue facing the field artillery is the fact that once an artillery unit receives a nonstandard mission the unit stops training core artillery tasks to perform its newly assigned non-doctrinal tasks. On the surface this makes sense, however; in this protracted war the field artillery is now being led by a corps of Field Artillerymen that have plenty of combat experience, but may have never fired a round in support of maneuver troops. For example, a second lieutenant that was commissioned in 2003 could now be a major (battalion operations officer) in an artillery unit and have never fired a round. How is this possible? Many artillerymen served their company grade time in a fires battalion that received a maneuver mission. These field artillerymen are being promoted and rightly so, but without the needed skill set to train a fires battalion or field artillery battalion. The two most perishable skill sets in the fires system are fire direction and fire support. However, how likely is it that a Battalion led by combat hardened, war decorated artillerymen, without essential Field Artillery skills will be trained? This new paradigm leaves a Fire Battalion at times leaning on the newly commissioned 2LT to train the Battalion and reintroduce the five principles of accurate predicted fire: accurate target location and size, accurate firing unit location, accurate weapon and ammunition data, accurate MET, and accurate computational procedures. This new paradigm is the reason why many maneuver commanders are losing their confidence in Fires units to provide timely and accurate fires. Has this new paradigm gone unnoticed? The answer is no and this question was addressed in 2009 by Brigadier General Ross Ridge, the Chief of the Field Artillery, in the supporting plan entitled "The Return of the King,"<sup>26</sup> in which he writes:

*"The Return of the King"* was developed to address many of the problems plaguing our soldiers and focused on rebuilding the field artillery experience base, re-establishing training capacity, and restoring senior field artillery leader oversight of the fire support soldiers in the maneuver units. We have seen a considerable degree of improvement by our soldiers and proficiency within the artillery formations since this initiative was implemented. We

continue to work closely with the BCT and maneuver Battalion commanders to further address readiness and manning concerns. We still have much to do to fully bring back the competence, confidence and prestige of the Field Artillery force within our Army.<sup>27</sup>

Field artillery units must inevitably find the balance needed to win the war we are in and continue to train core competencies to high standards. By training and regaining our ability to integrate lethal and non-lethal effects on target we can regain our reputation for excellence and “The King of Battle”.

Manning is also a recurring issue the Field Artillery must contend with to once again become a vibrant branch. On the enlisted side, the Field Artillery is a success story and the branch is manned at more than 100%. However, on the commissioned officer side, the story is not the same. Across all branches in the U.S. Army CPT attrition is on average 10%, however the field artillery branch loses 13 % of its CPTs.<sup>28</sup> Without the Army’s stop loss policy the Army in 2008 would have lost almost 17% of field artillery Captains.<sup>29</sup> So why do Field Artillery Captains leave the Army at a greater rate than their peers? According to LTC Ben Mathews, the Field Artillery Branch Chief, Field Artillery Captains leave the Army because of the lack of job satisfaction.<sup>30</sup> More plainly stated, these officers did not volunteer to become truck drivers, logisticians, military police, infantrymen, or anything other than Field Artillerymen. Only adding to this frustration is the fact that most Field Artillery Captains have deployed to combat once and are going to deploy again outside of their MOS. Furthermore, most of these Captains have not been afforded the opportunity to perform more than one job in a Battalion due to operational tempo (OPTEMPO) and may still be serving in the same position that they served in as a Lieutenant. Field Artillery Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) attrition is also a growing concern. As briefed by Brigadier General Ross Ridge, the Chief of the Field Artillery, at the 2009 Fires conference held at Ft Sill, OK, “FA LTCs are leaving the Army at an average of 14.6% a full 2%



higher than the Army average.”<sup>31</sup> According to LTC Andrew Gainey who served as the Field Artillery Branch LTC career manager, Field Artillery LTCs decide to leave the Army for a myriad of reasons. He expressed that the leading causes of attrition were due to the lack of job satisfaction from working outside of the traditional 13 series MOS, lack of opportunity to command at the O-6 tactical level, and multiple recurring deployments.<sup>32</sup> LTC Gainey also explained that due to the shortage of field artillery LTCs the field artillery branch does not have the ability to man division and corps-level joint fire cells (JFCs) with tier one officers.<sup>33</sup>

### **US Army Modular Transformation and it's Effect on the Field Artillery**

*As Artillerymen, you all coordinate and synchronize our non-lethal fires and are thus you are more important now than ever in this fight, and I believe you will ultimately determine our success in achieving our political and military objectives abroad.*<sup>34</sup>

*Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell (2008)*

Even prior to General Shinseki, the Chief of Staff of the Army's (CSA), retirement in June of 2003 the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, decided what the Army needed a was a change to the institution with an expeditionary mindset.<sup>35</sup> Although, Army transformation had been set in place for almost a decade the Army was institutionalized and unwilling to transform. Now, with General Shinseki out of the way, Secretary Rumsfeld selected retired General Peter Schoomaker, a Special Forces operator with an expeditionary attitude ready to move the Army into the next generation. The change the Secretary was looking for was an Army that was expeditionary and could provide geographic combatant commanders with Army brigades that were self-sustaining and could be universal plug and play modular brigades. To meet the increasing need for forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) the Army would have to grow almost by 30,000 soldiers, which led to the Army growing to forty-eight BCTs.

The Army has transformed, Donald Rumsfeld is no longer the Secretary of Defense, and General Peter Schoomaker is no longer the CSA and the Field Artillery is now feeling the unintended consequences of transformation and modularity. The most dramatic change with unintended consequences to the Field Artillery was its re-organization of field artillery battalions now organic to BCTs / loss of TRO for Fires Battalion, and loss of fifteen O-6 level commands including Division Artilleries. These Field Artillery Battalions would have been organic to the DIVARTY which was tasked with the TRO for each of the Field Artillery Battalions with habitual relationship to maneuver brigades within an Army Division. These Field Artillery Battalions that are now organic to BCTs have been renamed to Fires Battalions and their Modification table of organization and equipment (MTOE) has been reflected with changes due to modularity. Legacy Field Artillery units were comprised of three firing batteries with six artillery tubes per battery. However, due to modularity Fires Battalion now consist of two firing batteries with eight guns and no traditional service battery. This change was completed to match the new BCT concept in which the BCT now has two maneuver battalions rather than three maneuver battalions. However, this change has led to a 40 percent decrease in the opportunity to command a battery in a Fires Battalion along with the possibility of command dropping from five opportunities to three. Even more alarming is that although the modular BCTs only have two maneuver battalions, BCT formations now include an improved cavalry / reconnaissance squadron which could in evidently need a dedicated indirect fires support platform that is now not in the brigade due to the loss of the third firing battery in the organic Fires Battalion.

Another alarming change due to modularity is the reorganization of the legacy fire support element (FSE) which was organic to the legacy Field Artillery Battalion. The fire support element was comprised of all the fire support soldiers (13F) and officers that were

needed to provide support to the habitually supported brigade with fire supporters. These fire support soldiers and Officers are now assigned to maneuver units and do not have any relationship with the Fires Battalion that provides their fire support. These soldiers and officers have no senior Field Artillery leader to provide training oversight or experience. This change may seem insignificant, however; analysis from the Combined Training Centers (CTCs) would argue other wise. In an unpublished monograph written by the senior fire support trainers at Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and the National Training Center (NTC) in which they document that 90% of enlisted and commissioned fire support personnel are tasked by the maneuver commander at the echelon they are now assigned to perform mission outside of their fire support duties.<sup>36</sup> Supporting this argument is the white paper “The King and I” already mentioned in this analytical analysis in which the former BCT commanders write, “modularization places responsibility for fire support training on maneuver commanders who are neither trained nor resourced to perform these tasks.”<sup>37</sup> Bottom line up front, the system is not working and the erosion of the core fire support competencies has not gone unnoticed to senior artillery and maneuver commanders. While maneuver commanders have enjoyed having larger formations with multifaceted soldiers, the field artillery soldiers have lost their once honed skill and now their fire support skills must be re-blued.

If these fire support soldiers and Officer are assigned to a maneuver brigade and not training on fire support tasks than what are they doing? Brigade fire support officers (FSOs) are leading non-lethal effects planning teams, serving as the S5 future operations officer, lead planners, and special project officers. This leaves the most senior officer in the fire support system doing everything but fire support and the trend continues to the last private in the chain of fire support. 90 % Non-Commissioned officers (NCO) and soldiers continuously find

themselves doing everything but fire support.<sup>38</sup> Again this azimuth only points to core competency atrophy. When a private or junior soldier learns his MOS and then is never afforded the opportunity to work in that MOS until he or she is an NCO, the level occupational specialty will not be there when it is needed. The United States Marine Corps is also facing this issue with their fire supporters. In the 2008 Semi-Annual and Incident report submitted to the commanding officer of the Marine Artillery Detachment at Ft Sill, OK, Forward Observers (FO) procedures and target location are a serious area of concern; noting that the procedures and skills within those two areas are degraded as a result of inexperienced Liaison Officers (LNOs) and chiefs who are unable to properly give guidance to maneuver units on the capabilities of artillery.<sup>39</sup>

According to COL Michael J. Hartig, the single most evident flaw in the reorganization of the fires battalion in the BCT is that the Fires Battalion commander is not the direct fire support coordinator (DSFSCOORD) to the brigade commander.<sup>40</sup> Doctrinally the position is a Lieutenant Colonel position however, the position is currently filled with a major usually a Command and Staff graduate waiting to work in the fires battalion as the operations officer or the Battalion executive officer.<sup>41</sup> The fires battalion commander now only has a commander to commander relationship and has lost the ability to be the brigade commander's lethal and non-lethal fires support coordinator. Other problems with this system arise when fire supporters from across the BCTs are untrained or need to be trained. The fires battalion commander and Command Sergeants Major used to be charged with the responsibility of developing and training all field artillerymen across the brigade, however since the fire supporters are not assigned to the fires battalion the battalion leadership does not have the authority to task or the responsibility to train these soldiers, NCOs, and officers. This has undermined the fires battalion commander's ability to cross level or even provide career enhancing opportunities to soldiers, Non-

commissioned officers, and officers. However, due to modularity it is not unheard of and is even prevalent that the only field artillery officer to know the fires battalion commander is the BCT fire support officer (FSO) who is waiting for the opportunity to transition to the Fires Battalion. While this is the current answer and is doctrinally correct, not many, if any maneuver commanders like the current system. For example, at Ft Hood, Texas on 2 September 2010 Major General Dan Allyn, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Commander, hosted the First Team Fire Support Conference and said, “the importance of having a well trained fire support element and its ability to be a decisive combat element on the battlefield is invaluable.”<sup>42</sup> This small change to doctrine and MTOE has had severe negative unintended consequences marginalizing the fire support system.

Transformation and modularity have also had a huge impact to the lack of field artillery officer development. Specifically, company grade and junior field grade officer would have been mentored in the legacy system by a field artillery colonel who would have commanded the DIVARTY. However, due to modularity ten DIVARTYs were deactivated along with four Corps Artillerys (CARTYs) leaving no force field artillery (FFA) Headquarters or Corps artillery headquarters to fill both the TRO and FFA roles. While these headquarters were removed from the Army structure during transformation, the requirement for their roles still exists and has not been filled and a replacement capability has not been developed.<sup>43</sup> In the past, senior Field Artillerymen were in command of DIVARTYs and they would provide the TRO ensuring that the fire support system was trained in their core tasks, resourced correctly, and most importantly there to mentor the future of the Field Artillery. The assumption that BCTs would provide the necessary TRO to the Fires Battalions has been proven to be a myth. Colonel(R) Samuel R. White, writes in the 2009 bulletin for U.S. Field and Air Defense Artillerymen,<sup>44</sup>

These capability gaps are beginning to have consequences across the operational force. Observations from the combat training centers and a recent Rand study on core skills competency reveal a marked decrease in fire support proficiency within BCTs. BCT and division commanders highlighted the lack of an oversight and training capacity for Fires Battalions as the key contributing factor to the loss of proficiency in Fires Battalions and the key component in rebalancing the Field Artillery.<sup>45</sup>

Colonel White also mentions that the majority of divisions while deployed are managing up to seven BCTs and would like a FFA to manage and synchronize the lethal and nonlethal fires across the division's formation.<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned previously, the U.S. Army Field Artillery lost thirteen active component level commands and four CARTY commands due to transformation and modularity. However, this begs the question what did the field artillery retain? The answer is that the field artillery retained only six O-6 level commands, with a loss of 60% of the O-6 level command opportunities. The loss of these commands has been devastating to the health of the branch.

Colonel MacFarland and his peers write,

There are only six artillery brigade commands left in the whole Active Army. A branch with a built-in glass ceiling is not likely to retain or attract the best and the brightest. If it hasn't happened already, FA accessions will begin to decline as well. Not long ago, artillery was one of the most sought after branches for the top graduates of West Point. Today, it is one of the easiest branches to get into<sup>47</sup>

The Army does continue to publicize that Field Artillerymen can compete to command any one of the forty-eight BCTs. However, to date no Field Artillery Colonel has been selected to command a BCT or has even been selected as an alternate, but many Field Artillery Colonels have been selected to command U.S. Army Garrisons and Training Support Brigades. Colonels James Inman and Michael Gould, both former Field Artillery Branch Chiefs, highlight in their article "*Increasing the Flow Plugging the Holes-Addressing FA Manning Challenges*"<sup>48</sup> that one of the most significant challenges affecting the FA—and the one that may be talked about the

most—is the lack of O-6 level commands and subsequently, opportunities to be selected as a general officer. In the 2010 unpublished monograph, *“The Effect of Modularity on the Field Artillery Branch”*<sup>49</sup> Colonel Noel T. Nicolle examines the number of Field Artillerymen serving as general officers in 2003 and then again examines the General Officer Public Roster for those Field Artillery serving as general officers in 2008. The numbers are not only alarming, but also paint a gloomy picture for the future of the Field Artillery representation in the flag ranks. In 2003 the number of basic branch Field Artillery general officers serving by grade was 22% for General, 12.5% for Lieutenant General, 10% for Major General, and 10% for Brigadier General.<sup>50</sup> The 2008 General Officer Public Roster results highlighted much different percentages, 7% for General, 10.9% for Lieutenant General, 12% for Major General, and 5% for Brigadier General.<sup>51</sup> This decrease in Field Artillery officers serving in flag officer billets clearly demonstrates that the loss of O-6 level command opportunities has negatively affected the possibility for selection to serve as general officer.

#### **Effect of multiple in lieu of Missions in support of COIN Operations on the Field Artillery**

*The artillerist of the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> Marines found that they were no longer employing their as Marine Corps doctrine postulated, but instead were the well souls that provided personnel and units, up to Battalion strength, for any and all nonstandard mission that were required.*<sup>52</sup>

*Major Michael D. Grice (2008)*

Research conducted in early 2010 by Major Daniel C. Gibson, while attending the USMC Command and Staff College, demonstrates that the after seven years of persistent low intensity conflict Field Artillery units are continuously conducting in lieu of missions. Major Gibson produced a survey that was disseminated through all active duty field artillery battalions and the data recorded was alarming.<sup>53</sup> In total, eighteen active duty battalion commanders participated in the survey and two thirds of these commanders reported that their units served in non-traditional roles during the unit’s last combat rotation.<sup>54</sup> The Commandant of the NCO Academy at the

Fires Center of Excellence stated that numerous non-standard missions have caused a critical atrophy in Field Artillery core competencies.<sup>55</sup> CSM Dean J. Keveles, a respected senior Non-commissioned officer, charged with the responsibility for training all Field Artillery NCOs, also noted that on 31 March 2008 General Richard A. Cody, the VCSA, testified before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee and said, “soldiers are training solely for counter-insurgency operations and focusing on the mission of the brigade they are replacing in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and they are not training to full spectrum for other operations.”<sup>56</sup>

These repetitive in lieu of missions have taken a toll on the confidence of NCOs and junior Officers alike. NCOs attending professional military education (PME) courses at the U.S. Army NCO Academy (NCOES) have explained that they are not confident in their core competencies due to the number of nonstandard deployments and indicated that the current PME courses sustain skills, but do not allow for rebuilding or competence.<sup>57</sup> Field artillery officers also indicated in a Rand Study conducted in March 2008 that they were disproportionately less confident in their ability to perform battle staff functions associated with Field Artillery and fire support skills in mid to high intensity combat.<sup>58</sup> In the same study, Paladin Batteries (self-propelled artillery) consistently trended lower in skill proficiency than their sister infantry and armor units at CTC rotations concluding that 80% of the tasks that were assessed were now considered at risk when in the past Paladin units were among the premier artillery units and these tasks were rarely executed poorly.<sup>59</sup> This trend will continue until the demand for “boots on the ground” has been satiated and OPTEMPO allows for Field Artillery units to focus once a unit is back in RESET. Field Artillery units have been crippled from repetitive deployments conducting nonstandard missions and are untrained in their core tasks and drills—at both the individual and collective levels.<sup>60</sup>



A generation of junior and mid-level officers and NCOs has almost no experience in their FA duties. There are S3s who executed only nonstandard missions as battery commanders and battery commanders who have never fired an artillery round since their officer basic course.<sup>61</sup>

CSM Keveles specifically identifies that the modularity design has removed fire support soldiers from Field Artillery units and these soldiers and NCOs are conducting in lieu of missions as part of maneuver BCTs.<sup>62</sup> He specifically focuses on this issue as he writes,

The modularity design of the brigade combat teams took fire supporters out of the Fires Battalions and placed them into direct assignments within the combined arms Battalions. This reduced the senior FA leaders' oversight of training and skill sustainment contributing to increased degradation in the MOS 13F Fire Support specialist skill set. In support of maneuver commanders, section chiefs perform platoon sergeant duties, and platoon sergeants perform first sergeant duties, finding themselves working autonomously on separate forward operating bases (FOBs).<sup>63</sup>

#### **Regaining the Throne: The Way Ahead**

*We are going to do whatever maneuver needs and whatever our Army needs to support them. But we have to make sure that when we come back, when we redeploy, that we have to be able to refocus on some of those very core competencies: delivery of lethal fires and the integration of lethal and non-lethal fires. As we come back, we have to make sure that we get our heads back in the game. Because nobody else is pulling lanyards. Nobody else is shooting rockets. It's my guys.*<sup>64</sup>

*Major General Peter M. Vangiel (2008)*

The demand for "boots on the ground" supporting counter-insurgency operations (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, seven years of continuous in lieu of missions, and the US Army's transformation / modularity have created the "perfect storm" resulting in negative unintended consequences on the Field Artillery branch... However, to regain the throne the U.S. Army Field Artillery must regain its core competencies, work to increase the number of Fire Brigades to one per division, and restructure the MTOE reconsolidating the fire support element back into the Fires Battalion. Artillery soldiers, NCOs and Officers alike deserve the time needed to attend PME to re-blue their core competencies and the PME schools need to shift their focus from

polishing / sustaining skills to rebuilding core competencies. However, time is a precious resource, but the Field Artillery must take this issue to heart and all artillery specific courses need to be extended to allow for rebuilding core competencies. A recent success story is the Field Artillery Captain's Career Course (FACCC) which has been redesigned and has extended the FACCC from twenty weeks to twenty four weeks. The course was redesigned in 2008 following the white paper "The King and I" and a survey conducted of the last two 2007 FACCC classes which uncovered that two out of three captains reported to the FACCC that they had not performed traditional company-grade FA tasks or basic artillery skills they learned at their FA basic officer courses.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the field artillery also developed a plan in which they submitted to General William S. Wallace, Commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), allowing the expansion of the NCOES course to allow for the mastery of artillery skills rather than familiarization.<sup>66</sup> Senior field artillerymen must ensure that young field artillery NCOs and officers are given the opportunity to relearn their core competencies and then given the ability to practice, hone, and master their skills once they report to the operational force. Marine Corps Major Michael D. Grice states this best when he writes,

The future of the artillery community lies in the young leaders, at all levels, who are building their basis of experience early in their career. Over 5 years of COIN warfare have taken their toll on the skills of these artillerymen.<sup>67</sup>

The current chief of the field artillery, Brigadier General Thomas S. Vandal the 48<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the U.S. Army Field Artillery School, must spearhead the effort to increase the number of fires brigades to one per division. Currently, there are six active duty Fires Brigades to support ten active duty divisions and only the 18<sup>th</sup> Fires Brigade and the 41<sup>st</sup> Fires Brigade are geographically located with a divisional unit. A fires brigade per divisional unit is the optimum solution to not only win the fight that we are in, but also to create a field artillery community that

is ready and relevant for future high intensity conflict (Annex 1).<sup>68</sup> According to William A. Shoffner current commander of the 18<sup>th</sup> Fires Brigade (Airborne), the fires brigade offers three general benefits to the maneuver formations within a division: establishment and enforcement of standards for all firing units; a system for certification; trained leaders to oversee the certification program, and an O-6 level commander to assist in the management and professional development of artillery leaders.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned in this analytical analysis, a Fires Brigade per division could and would fulfill training readiness and oversight (TRO) once executed by legacy DIVARTYs. This would place a Department of the Army command selected field artillery O-6 in charge of training, leading, and mentoring all Field Artillerymen across the division. The fires brigade commander could then ensure all field artillery battalions were trained to standard across the division, removing the current responsibility from BCT commanders and ensuring external evaluations were executed and resourced. Just as important as ensuring that Artillery units are trained, a fires brigade commander could offer officers and NCOs alike the opportunity to move throughout the division to perform career-enhancing opportunities once possible in legacy DIVARTYs. If given the opportunity and responsibility of TRO a Fires Brigade commander could be the torchbearer ensuring that core competencies are trained insignificant to deployment cycles and repetitive in lieu of missions. Currently two of the Army's active divisions, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry division and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division have formalized their field artillery and fire support standards in a document known as the REDBOOK.<sup>70</sup> This option provides the Army the flexibility to win the war we are in and have a standing artillery force trained for future HIC.

Furthermore, ten divisionally aligned fires brigades would then increase the opportunity for field artillerymen to command at the O-6 level, increasing the opportunity for selection to general officer. This would also facilitate removing the glass ceiling currently atop the field

artillery with only six tactical command opportunities. This would effectively be a 60% increase in the opportunity to command at the O-6 tactical level. While ten opportunities to command at the O-6 level may seem to be great, one must take into consideration that currently ninety-six former Battalion commanders are competing for the six brigade command opportunities. Without the opportunity to command at the O-6 level the field artillery will not retain or even worse not attract the best and the brightest young men to serve as field artillerymen.

Finally, the field artillery must work to correct the MTOE by reconsolidating the fire support element back into the fires battalion in the fires brigades. This change would then place the responsibility back on the fires battalion commander to ensure that the fire support specialists in the BCT were trained. Furthermore, the fires battalion commander would then be afforded the opportunity to manage, train, and resource all field artillerymen across the BCT with the TRO of the fires brigade commander as mentioned above. The legacy system in which all field artillerymen were assigned to the field artillery battalion provided better trained fire supporters and the argument that it is beneficial to have fire supporters assigned to maneuver units has been proven to be false at all the CTCs. The atrophy in these skill sets is not only embarrassing but has left maneuver units without the ability to maneuver and fire.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the once honed and trained U.S. Army field artillery that silenced the Iraqi Army in 2003 is losing its ability to attract and retain the best and brightest soldiers, NCOs, and officers, train itself, and worst of all has lost the confidence of many maneuver commanders. Understandably, the field artillery must win the war we are in. In doing so field artillerymen have selflessly served as truck drivers, civilian police trainers, military police, civil affair operations, information operations, advising and assisting provincial reconstruction teams

basically performing virtually every conceivable mission in support of winning the war we are in. However, history shows that when states focus their armies on doing nothing but counterinsurgency and world constabulary missions excluding conventional warfare strategic failure can result.<sup>71</sup>

In summer 2006 in southern Lebanon, the Israeli army suffered a significant battlefield defeat at the hands Hezbollah, who fought with conventional tactics centered on small infantry squads using machineguns, mortars, and anti-tank missiles. Israeli scholar Avi Kober and Army historian Matt Mathews have shown that the Israeli's army's conventional fighting skills had atrophied due to many years of doing almost nothing but counterinsurgency operations in the Palestinian territories.<sup>72</sup>

There is more at stake than losing the moniker "The King of Battle", it is losing the ability to maneuver and fire which in turn allows our Army to validate its existence defending the American way of life and winning our nation's war. The American way of life does not depend on the field artillery, but the ability to defend the American way of life does.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Janice E. McKinney, *The Organizational History of the Field Artillery 1775-2003*, Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington, DC., 2007. 318

<sup>5</sup> Ross Ridge, "Commanding General" briefing slides with scripted commentary, Fort Sill, OK, 15 May 2009. 12

<sup>6</sup> William G. Pitts, "Overview: Field Artillery in Operation Iraqi Freedom." *Field Artillery* no. 5, Sep/Oct, 2003, 2-3, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=515750731&Fmt=7&clientId=32176&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed: January 20, 2010)

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel R. White, "Fires – a Joint Professional Bulletin for U.S. Field and Air Defense Artillerymen. The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection.", [http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume6/october\\_2008/10\\_08\\_4\\_pf.html](http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume6/october_2008/10_08_4_pf.html)

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<sup>12</sup> Ross Ridge, "The Field Artillery Strategy", *Fires*, (September-October 2009), 8

<sup>13</sup> MacFarland, Shields, and Snow, "White Paper: The King and I: The Impending Crisis in Field Artillery's ability to provide Fire Support to Maneuver Commanders, 1

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<sup>21</sup> Gates, "Striking the Right Balance," 4

<sup>22</sup> MacFarland, Shields, and Snow, "White Paper: The King and I: The Impending Crisis in Field Artillery's ability to provide Fire Support to Maneuver Commanders, 1.

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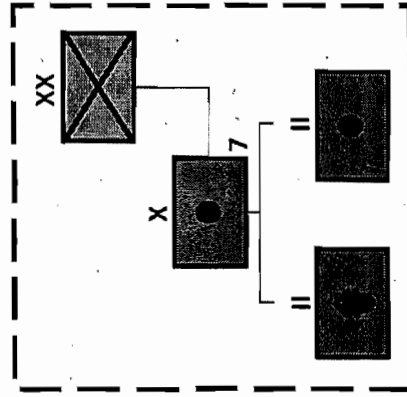
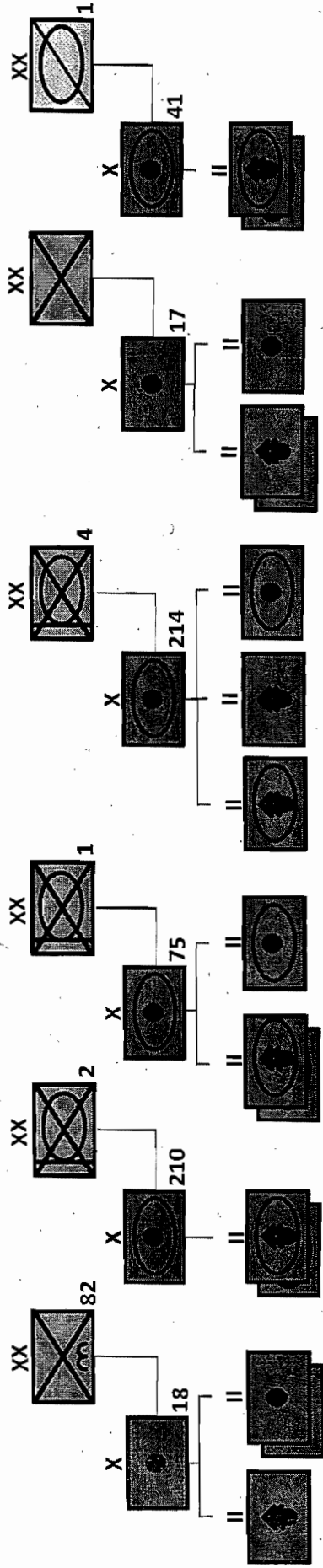
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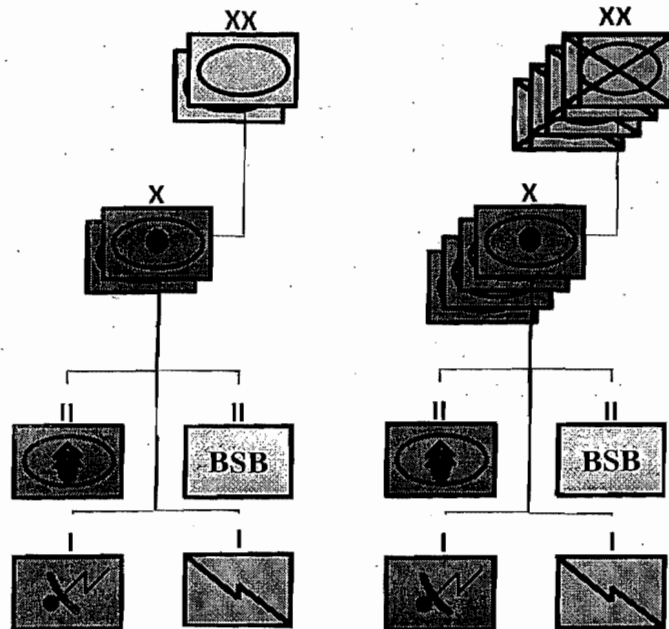
# Current AC FiB Set



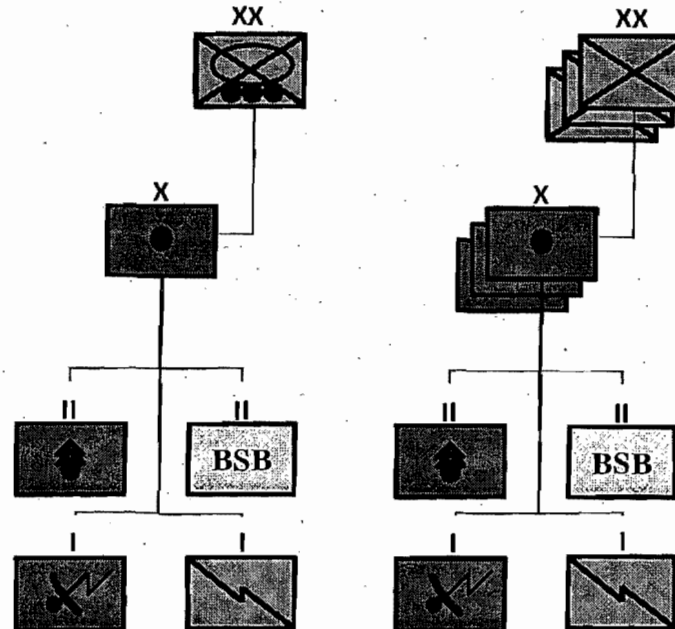
1037	225	9993	11255
OFF	WO	ENL	TOT

# Proposed AC FiB Set

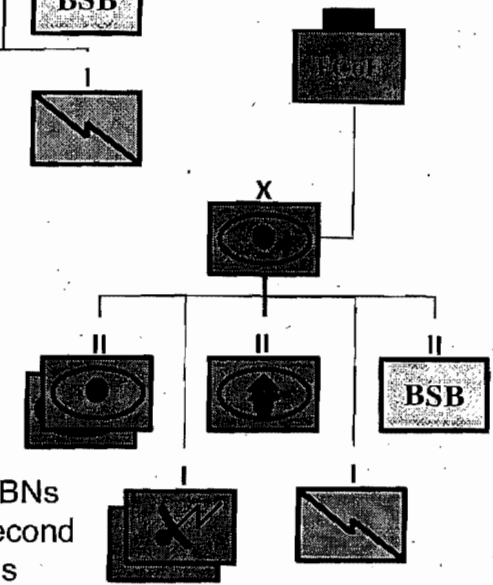
## 2 Armored Divisions



## 8 Infantry Divisions



Proposed Set	1126	316	9432	10758
	OFF	WO	ENL	TOT
▲	89	91	-561	-497



## Pros

- Enables all 10 AC Divisions
- Ensures training of the Fires force
- Provides FA CMD oversight of Bn Certification Programs
- ↑ FA O-6 Commands (+5)
- ↑ BDE-level CDR to DIV CDR
- ↑ Sr Mentorship for Bn CDRs
- Provides FCoE Strategic Fires Capability
- FCoE Fires BDE (Army's GS/GSR swing capability; 2d command for FA O5s - brings best & brightest DIV ideas to FCoE)
- Better positions FA force against budgetary/personnel cuts

## Cons

- FiB tied to Division
- ↓ FA authorizations
- ↑ BSB/Sig Co authorizations
- Smaller O-6 CMD (1 FA BN vs. 3)
- ↓ FA O-5 Commands (-3 )
- Force Mod/ DA-level Structure
- BRAC issues at:
  - Fort Riley
  - Fort Carson
  - Fort Campbell
  - Fort Stewart
  - Fort Drum
  - Fort Sill
- Movement away from Status Quo